ently a place in which they have taken up a permanent abode. Flying from these high perches they look not a little like Martins, and might be mistaken for them at a season when the latter birds are present.

A Starling was killed about a year ago in the immediate outskirts of Brooklyn by a boy who knocked it down with a stone. I am unable to give the date.

I first noted the Starling in the field on October 8, this year, when a flock of a dozen or more was seen perched in a tree by the roadside near the Kensington Station. During this and the next month I saw them in this locality several times. Once or twice one or more birds were seen on the piazza roof of a suburban cottage in apparently *friendly* company with English Sparrows. On October 22, about thirty individuals of this species were seen in this neighborhood. Two specimens were shot, the stomachs of which were sent to Dr. Merriam, chief of the United States Biological Survey.

The bill of fare of the Starling has not been materially changed by its transportation to another continent. It enjoys in England at about the same time of year, about the same food. In the one full stomach examined (the other was nearly empty), ninety-five per cent of the contents was animal matter, mainly insects (multipeds and beetles, larval lampyrids, grasshoppers, crickets, ichneumonid, caterpillar), but also included two small pieces of bone, "probably belonging to some batrachian." The five per cent was merely vegetable rubbish. Dr. Merriam kindly stated that the contents of this stomach, examined by Prof. Beal, agree essentially with those of three stomachs taken in England in October.

The bird will doubtless widen its range on Long Island, though its extension in this direction since its introduction into New York City, in 1890, has not as yet been rapid. — William C. Braislin, M. D., *Brooklyn, N. Y.*

The Song of the Western Meadow Lark. — In 'The Osprey' of July–August, 1897, Rev. P. B. Peabody must refer to me as the recent writer in the 'The Auk,' in connection with the song of the Western Meadowlark (*Sturnella magna neglecta*). The twelve examples which were copied by me at Gridley, Cal., and published in the 'The Auk' of January, 1896, had been heard year after year by me, some of them at least a thousand times, and were very carefully copied with the help of pitch pipe and paper, and I should have stated in the most positive manner that I had heard them sung perfectly many times, although I had heard them sung imperfectly oftener than otherwise. In the brief note which accompanied those twelve examples of musical notation in 'The Auk,' I said I had heard more *writeable* songs at *Gridley* than in any and all other places where I had been in California. The truth is that I have never heard these songs outside of the township of Gridley, excepting two of them which I have heard near Stockton, where, as at Gridley, I have spent much time.

I am not surprised at Mr. Peabody's unsatisfactory comparison of these Gridley songs with the songs of the Minnesota Meadowlark. They do not sing alike, and probably none of our California birds sing or use such language as Mr. Peabody says the Minnesota birds use, for he says those birds say naughty words. Ours never do that, nor do they even use such language as: "*Screep-a-rip-ple-rip!! Take a little sip*"! nor "*Jehu, jaa-hu drink a little!*" Those Minnesota birds must be totally depraved. Ours are always well behaved.

Possibly Mr. Peabody does not interpret them rightly, and it is quite certain that no two persons would interpret that song language just alike — neither in Minnesota nor in California. Something would probably depend on the mood that happened to possess the interpreter.

So much for language songs. If Mr. Peabody, or any one who has a little knowledge of music, will take 'The Auk' of Jan., 1896, to Gridley, on the ranch of Charles Belding, he or they will hear Meadowlark songs that will just fit the musical notations in it, and there will be no doubt about the song or songs I intended to represent, although the second note in number nine should be *sol*, or a fifth instead of a third; I believe I lost the true pitch in recopying that number.

Several of those twelve songs have a compass of just an octave, and this is a rather common feature of our Sturnella songs in different parts of California.

There are several good points in Mr. Peabody's article in 'The Osprey,' and one of them is his suggestion of using the phonograph in reproducing bird songs. With its aid we may have the pleasure of comparing the notes of the Spade-footed Toad, the Burrowing Owl and the Pigmy Owl with those of the Yellow-billed Cuckoo, or those of the Burrowing Owl with the notes of the European Cuckoo.

Dr. Coues says in his 'Birds of the Northwest,' "The hooting of the Burrowing Owl is so similar to the notes of the Yellow-billed Cuckoo that I should have been deceived myself on one occasion had I not been forewarned by my friend Cooper; and secondly, as this gentleman remarks, the noise made by the Spade-footed Toad (*Scaphiopus*) is also very similar."

When I first heard the Pigmy Owl I thought I heard a Yellow-billed Cuckoo, and I was then familiar with the notes of the latter.

Verbal descriptions of bird songs are probably, in most instances, more interesting to the writer of them than to any one else and any one who has been reading such descriptions, without end, during more than half a life time, is apt to weary of them and yearn for something more definite. If the phonograph should prove to be unsatisfactory in reproducing bird songs we might adopt Lieut. Derby's system of using figures as qualifiers: for instance, a middling good bird song would be a fifty beautiful song; an unsurpassingly beautiful song would be one hundred beautiful; anything for even a moderate degree of precision.— Lyman Belding, *Stockton, Cal.*